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Washington, D.C. -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has awarded a \$12.7 million contract to Incore Incorporated of San Antonio to begin construction of the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery.

The initial 110-acre project calls for the preparation of 14,600 gravesites, including 2,000 lawn crypts and 2,000 columbaria and garden niches for cremated remains. The plan also includes an entrance area, public information center, administration and maintenance facilities, a flag/assembly area, a memorial walkway, two committal service shelters, landscaping, and roadway, utility and irrigation systems.

The 638-acre cemetery is located midway between Dallas and Fort Worth near Mountain Creek Lake. The construction award is part of the estimated \$18.1 million it will cost to open the cemetery, including \$1.8 million to purchase the site and \$4 million for site preparation. Completion of the first phase is scheduled for spring 1999.

"The veterans of this nation have earned the honor of burial in a national cemetery," said VA Secretary-Designate Hershel W. Gober. "This cemetery will help make that honor a reality for more than 500,000 veterans and their families in the greater Dallas-Fort Worth area. Its construction is one of VA's vital missions -- to establish and maintain dignified burial places for veterans and their families," he added.

Jerry Bowen, director of VA's National Cemetery System, said: "The veterans of this region have worked long and hard for a national cemetery. This contract award begins the work needed to create a national shrine befitting their sacrifice and dedication to our nation."

With last week's dedication and opening of the Tahoma National Cemetery near Seattle, VA's National Cemetery System now operates 115 cemeteries, of which 57 have available gravesites for new burials and 58 have limited burial services, such as for cremated remains. All are able to inter the spouse or eligible children of a family member already buried.

All veterans with discharges other than dishonorable, their spouses and dependent children are eligible for burial in a national cemetery. VA also provides grave markers or headstones for the unmarked graves of eligible veterans even if they are not buried in a VA cemetery. Information on VA burial benefits is available from national cemetery offices and VA regional offices, which can be reached toll-free at 1-800-827-1000. Information also is available on VA's home page on the Internet at <http://www.va.gov> or the National Cemetery System's home page at <http://www.va.gov/cemetery/index.htm>.